

Peer Support Programs: Overview

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Peer Support Programs by and for people with mental illnesses (“consumers”) take many forms throughout the VA and wider community. They vary according to the nature of the peer interaction, the intensity of the interaction (weekly, monthly, single session), compensation (volunteer, CWT, or paid) and the amount of training and supervision involved. Peer Support Programs are a very helpful addition to professional mental health services, delivering things that it cannot. They can also stand alone, and often do.

The following is an overview of the types of peer programs that are available throughout the VHA and in the non-VA community. **Please note this chart is a work in progress: programs may have opened, closed, or changed contact information.** We have included contact information whenever possible.

Peer Programs have a number of different purposes in different combinations:

- Information: helping other consumers find resources they need, become familiar with a new program, gather information to solve problems and reach their goals.
- Support: structured or informal sharing of encouragement among others who “get it”
- Skill building: daily life-task skills, self advocacy, illness management, communication, etc
- Social Network: to lessen isolation, provide welcoming enjoyable interactions with others
- Advocacy: formally or informally working to dismantle stigma, foster respect, protect rights
- Inspiration: providing success experiences, role models, articulation of goals and means to reach them, instilling hope.
- Empowerment: a combination of believing in ones self, holding on to hope, and reaching for the means to reach one’s goals.

VA EXAMPLES	COMMUNITY EXAMPLES	REFERENCES
Drop-in Center: non-clinical informal setting for socializing, peer support, resources access		
VISN 17, Central Texas	<i>On Our Own, Inc. (Baltimore City)</i> 6301 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214 Contact person: Tony Wright 410-444-4500 Tonyw21214@aol.com <i>On Our Own Center (Balt. County)</i> 10 Dunmanway, Baltimore, MD 21222 410-282-1701 / 800-307-2203 Contact Person: David Burkhardt	Mowbray et al, 2005
Clubhouse: structured daily program run jointly by consumers and professional staff		
VISN 7, Georgia	International Center for Clubhouse Development http://www.iccd.org/	Mowbray et al, 2005

Warm Lines: peer run telephone call-in service for support and information		
Stratton VAMC Community Day Prog. 113 Holland Ave, Albany, NY Nicholas Pazienza nicholas.pazienza@med.va.gov	Friendship Line 1-888-448-9777 Peer Mentor Program Warm Line 520-770-9909 http://www.geocities.com/az_mh_consumers/pmp	Pudlinski, 2001
Peer Counseling: trained peers provide one-to-one or group counseling to other consumers		
Batavia VA PTSD Peer Support Prog. Contact: Terri Julian Terri.Julian@med.va.gov Cleveland VAMC, Brecksville OH Center for Stress Recovery Kenneth.Prabucki@med.va.gov VISN 16, Oklahoma City Buddy system of home visits and phone support Michelle Sherman, PhD Michelle.Sherman@med.va.gov (405) 270-0501, ext 5546	Peer Bridger Project 1 Columbia Place, Albany, NY 12207 Tel: 518-436-0008 Tanya Stevens: tanyas@nyaprs.org www.NYAPRS.org (Peer Bridger link on left)	
Consumer-run organizations: may combine various specific programs and advocacy w/ emphasis on a welcoming environment for consumers		
Batavia VA PTSD Peer Support Prog. Contact: Terri Julian Terri.Julian@med.va.gov Errera Community Care Center Moe Armstrong: moea@shore.net 115 Boston Post Rd West Haven, CT 06516 VISN 17, Central Texas: support groups, learning lab, drop in, warm line, orientation to services, transportation, escort to appointments.	Nueva Luz Resource and Advocacy Center 236 S. Tucson Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85716 520-770-1197 www.geocities.com/az_mh_consumers/nuevaluz Hearts and Ears 3501 St. Paul St., suite LL4, Baltimore, MD 410-889-2022 Contact Person: Paula Lafferty heartsandears@toast.net	Roberts, 1987
Support Groups: peer-led meetings to share mutual aid, discuss problems and strategies		
VA Boston Outpatient Clinic, Mental Health Clinic, RP / Psychosis Programs Contact: Melissa S. Wattenberg, PhD Location: 251 Causeway Street Boston, MA 02114 melissa.wattenberg@med.va.gov	Depression and Related Affective Disorders Association (DRADA) 2330 West Joppa Rd., Suite 100 Lutherville, MD 21093 410-583-2919 www.drada.org (will arrange support groups in other locations)	
Peer-managed Housing: Consumer managed transitional or long term supportive living		
VANTHCS HCHV (Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program) Desralei.Jackson@med.va.gov Dallas, Texas	PeerHousing.Org 1281 E 19th Ave. #A303 Anchorage, Alaska 99501 (907)272-8216 katsumi@peerhousing.org	Hutchison & Pedlar, 1999

Crescent Building Transitional Residence Program Debra J. Locke, M.Ed, CPRP, VRS Debra.Locke@MED.VA.GOV Lowell, MA	Main Street Housing, Inc. On Our Own-Maryland http://www.onourownmd.org	
Crisis House: Peer-run highly supportive environment for consumers in mental health crisis		
	The Crisis Hostel Ithaca, NY (607) 272-3724 http://www.power2u.org/selfhep/crisis_hotel.html	
Vocational Training: Peer-run programs to prepare consumers for employment or business, or to employ consumers directly in supportive environment		
Veteran Business Owner Initiative Edith Nourse Rogers VA Hospital 200 Springs Road, 116B Bedford, MA 01730 jerry.pinsky@med.va.gov (781)-687-3338 Long Beach CA Day Treatment Center Richard.Tingey@med.va.gov	Shining Reflections Restaurant & Tea Room @ Shining Reflections Vocational Center 330-385-7000 or 330-385-0533 Fax: 330-385-2008 http://www.adultrecoverynetwork.org/content/programs/shiningreflections.html (one long address) Laurie Mitchell Employment Center 8794 "S" Sacramento Drive Alexandria, VA 22309-1677 703-531-6380 lmecc@lmecc.org http://www.lmecc.org	
Advocacy: Organizations to advance and the legal and human rights of mental health care consumers		
VA Mental Health Consumer Councils http://www.mentalhealth.med.va.gov/cc	CHARG Resource Center 709 East 12th Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80203 (303) 830-8805 Fax: (303) 830-8918 info@charg.org or http://www.charg.org/ Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumer Assn. 4105 Derry Street Harrisburg, PA 17111 1-800-88PMHCA or (717) 564-4930 FAX: (717) 564-4708 http://www.pmhca.org/index.htm	Watkins and Callicutt, 1997 Frese, 1998
Homeless Outreach: Consumers helping other consumers who are homeless		
Southwest Behavioral Health Services 1112 E. Washington St. Phoenix, AZ 85034 602-256-2688	Cleveland Comprehensive Homeless Center 1000 Brecksville Road Brecksville Ohio 44141 Lisa.Pape@med.va.gov	

Life Skills & Socialization: Consumers helping other consumers learn and maintain daily living tasks (banking, grocery shopping, recreation) and/or become familiar with a new mental health program		
<p>Long Beach Day Treatment Center Richard.Tingey@med.va.gov Long Beach CA (VISN 22) breakfast club, welcome basket, computer and shopping help</p> <p>VANTHCS - CWT/Veterans Industries Sharon.Crowder@med.va.gov Dallas, Texas</p> <p>VISN-5 alumni programs: graduates of a program return to be role models for current clients. (need fill in contacts)</p>		<p>Felton et al, 1995</p>
Empowerment Programs: peer-led classes/groups focused on skill-building & values clarification towards adopting a self-guided, positive, active stance regarding living one's life and with mental illness.		
<p>Vet to Vet Peer Program (VISN 1) Laurie Harkness, Ph.D Laurie.Harkness@med.va.gov (203)931-4062 http://www.veteranrecovery.org (click on "peer support education" in upper left)</p> <p>NEW West LA Vet to Vet Program Roy Brown roy.brown@med.va.gov 113 01 Wilshire Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90073 http://www.vet2vet.us</p>	<p>Queen's Behavioral Health Services Kaheihimalie Building, 1374 Nuuanu Ave. Honolulu, Hawaii (808) 926-0466 The facility offers a 15 week course that encourages consumers to deal with their feelings about themselves and their SMI.</p> <p>Peer to Peer from NAMI (national) www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=peer-to-peer</p>	
On Line: Internet web-rings, support groups, message boards, blogs, and other support and information exchange via email and websites		
<p>Veteran Recovery Group http://groups.yahoo.com/group/veteranrecovery</p>	<p>Beyond Madness Webring /www.geocities.com/steel_tears/bmadness.html</p> <p>People Who: http://www.peoplewho.net</p> <p>Creative Expression: http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Creative-Expression/</p>	<p>King, and Moreggi, 1998</p> <p>Hsiung, 2000</p>

Helpful Websites

Veteran Recovery: www.veteranrecovery.org
Directory of Consumer-Driven Services: <http://www.cdsdirectory.org/>
National Mental Health Consumer Self-help Clearinghouse: <http://www.mhselfhelp.org>